United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ On first day of official visit to the Netherlands, Secretary-General delivers public address on international law, attended by Prince of Orange and leaders of Dutch Government and international legal bodies.

+ Use of air power by UNPROFOR to attain military objectives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as proposed at NATO summit last week, would require more military assets than those now available, Secretary-General tells Security Council; Special Representative drawing up detailed plans for such military operations.

+ Co-Chairmen of International Conference on Former Yugoslavia say that two days of talks between warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina have ended without any new agreements; parties agree to resume talks on 10 February.

+ Most Member States favour enlargement of Security Council, General Assembly President says in informal paper as Working Group on Council composition holds first meeting.

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On the first day of his official visit to the Netherlands, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today delivered a public address on the subject of international law. It was attended by the Prince of Orange, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and the President and members of the International Court of Justice and the President and members of the International Tribunal for Crimes in the former Yugoslavia, as well as members of the diplomatic corps and other leading Dutch and international figures.

This evening, the Secretary-General was scheduled to attend a working dinner hosted by Prime Minister and the members of his Cabinet.

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The use of air power by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina to attain recently proposed objectives would require

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military assets in excess of what is now available to the Force there, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has told the Security Council. He gave that assessment in a letter to the Council dated 18 January (S/1994/50), in response to a declaration issued last week by the Heads of State and Government attending a meeting of the North Atlantic Council.

In that declaration, the participants affirmed their readiness, under the authority of the Security Council, "to use air strikes to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the designated safe areas and other threatened areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina". They also urged the UNPROFOR authorities to to draw up plans to permit the currently blocked rotation of the UNPROFOR contingent stationed in Srebrenica, and the opening of the Tuzla airfield for humanitarian purposes.

The Secretary-General said the new proposal implied that UNPROFOR could launch offensive action against Bosnian Serb elements which obstructed -- or threatened to obstruct -- its military operations. UNPROFOR had previously only been mandated to use air support in defence of United Nations personnel. Special Representative Yasushi Akashi had drawn up an urgent preparatory study on the proposal and had now been asked to prepare detailed plans for military operations, with air power used as required, to achieve those objectives. He was asked to do that in close coordination with the Southern Command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding had been sent to Brussels to brief the Secretary-General of NATO on the matter.

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The Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, announced in Geneva this evening that two days of talks between the parties to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina had ended without any new agreement being reached. Lord Owen said the parties had agreed to return to Geneva on 10 February for further talks, but he said it had been impossible to break the deadlock between them. He predicted that they would continue fighting and said he feared the situation would only have gotten worse by the time the next round of talks were convened.

Lord Owen said there had been discussion, but no agreement, on a proposal that territorial disputes be referred to an arbitration commission which would be appointed by the International Court of Justice. The parties had agreed to install a hot line and to exchange personnel, in the hopes that improved communications could help to avoid potential catastrophies. Lord Owen said too that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, had been promised by the delegates to the talks that more land convoys would be allowed to get through to Tuzla, starting immediately.

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Virtually all Member States of the United Nations favour an increase in the membership of the Security Council, with no voices to the contrary, according to an informal paper issued by General Assembly President Samuel R.

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Insanally (Guyana). The paper was provided to the Assembly's Open-Ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, which held its first meeting at Headquarters today. It contained an overview of the positions of Member States on the question, based on almost 100 written replies submitted at the invitation of the Secretary-General and on the views expressed by delegations during the Assembly's 48th session.

According to the informal paper, many States want the Security Council to reflect the radical changes in the world and the increase in the Organization's overall Membership, in order to make it more representative and democratic. However, views on the criteria for revising the Council's composition varied widely. Most States envisaged the total number of seats being increased from 15 to between 19 and 25, although some favoured 31. Many States stipulated, however, that an increase in the membership should not diminish the Council's efficiency.

Most States want to retain the existing categories of permanent and non-permanent Council members, although new categories of membership were also suggested. Those included new permanent seats without the power of veto; rotating permanent seats, with or without the veto; and semi-permanent seats or extended membership. Some States envisaged an increase of at least one, and as much as seven, in the number of permanent members. However, others felt that there should be no additional permanent seats at all. Diverse factors were cited regarding the criteria for Council membership, including the size of peace-keeping and financial contributions, the size of population and territory, economic potential, regional importance, geopolitical situation and military capability.

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